

WATCH: Riva Tims Shares Intimate Details of Marriage, Ministry Collapse

Pastor Riva Tims of Majestic Church opens up about the details surrounding the death of her husband, Zachery, and how God stepped in when she found out about his infidelity and after their divorce.

WATCH: Ready to Give Up and Quit? Watch This First

Joyce Meyer has a word for you if you're ready to quit.

Does Eve's Mistake Ban Women From the Ministry?

I recently read one theologian's viewpoint on why women should not teach, preach or pastor. Turns out, it all goes back to that crazy apple (1 Tim. 2:8-15). Eve was deceived and ate the apple and disqualified every other woman from ever having

significant insight to impart to a man, henceforth and forever. Amen. So be it. Selah.

It's interesting to note how many other scriptures have to be eliminated or re-invented in order to build a whole philosophy on 1 Timothy 2:14. These include Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 4:12 ("the" and "saint" are gender-inclusive words so Paul is saying, "Equip men and women for the work of the ministry"), as well as all the Biblical accounts of women who did amazing things like Deborah, Jael, Miriam, Huldah, Esther, Phoebe and Priscilla. (He mentions these women, but says they're too rare to establish a pattern. Sigh. Don't even get me started, Mr. Theologian.)

Anyway, I'm not here to duke this one out, just interested in how we arrive at our opinions. Most people I know who have disqualified women from leadership would not really be able to tell you why. They usually have picked a comfortable viewpoint without applying much muscle to analysis and you'll generally discover a wide load philosophy teetering on the tiny shoulders of 1 Timothy 2. (If you wonder how I know this, you're welcome to stand next to me on a Sunday after I speak and listen to the conversations that ensue.)

It's taken a long time for me to build a philosophy as well. I'm blessed to be married to a man who loves what God is doing in my life as much as he loves it in his own. I'm also grateful to have a pastor who frees me to speak without fear of reprisal or rebuke. If these human men in a fallen world want that much for me, wouldn't my Father in heaven want even more? Or am I—2,000 years after the greatest act of redemption and release in all of history—still silenced by an apple?

“Pray Before It’s Too Late and Judgment Falls on Our Nation,” Says Billy Graham’s Daughter

Blow the the the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand. ... Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God... Joel 2:1, 13

While at home caring for my husband, I have had time to be quiet and listen more to the whispers of the Spirit. He has revealed things to me in the stillness that I’m not sure I would have heard in my former busyness. One of the things He has impressed on me is that we are living at the end of human history as we know it. In light of this, He has given me some practical assignments. One was to be the Honorary Chair for the National Day of Prayer 2014 this past May. He gave me the message I was to deliver, which was from Joel 1: The Day of the Lord is at hand. It was a message warning of judgment that is coming.

Just recently, He has given me another assignment, which is **to call His people in our nation to prayer.**

This assignment came indirectly from a Syrian pastor through a National Day of Prayer attendee. In obedience, I am blowing the trumpet, sounding the alarm, and issuing a national prayer initiative entitled *7 7 7: An Urgent Call to Prayer*. The call is for God’s people to pray for each of the first seven days in the seventh month—July 1-7. Then on the seventh day, July 7, we are to pray and fast for seven hours.

The purpose is three-fold:

- **For God the Father to restrain, protect and deliver His**

people from the evil that has come into our world.

- For God the Son to be exalted, magnified and glorified in His church, in our nation and in our lives.
- For God the Holy Spirit to fall on us in a fresh way, compelling the church to repent of sin and our nation to return to faith in the living God, resulting in a great national spiritual awakening.

For those who sign up, I will provide a prayer for each of the seven days to help unite us in one spirit and one voice as we cry out to God. You can sign up for the daily email prayers on that will help give focus to our worship, repentance and intercession.

I'm urging you to participate, as well as send out word to everyone on your email list, or who follows you on Facebook or Twitter. I will be sending out an e-blast on Friday, June 27. Please help pass the word.

God's people need to pray before it's too late, and judgment falls on our nation.

God's Key to Breaking Your Addiction to Food

How do I get rid of this mountain of flesh? That was the question I wrote in my prayer journal in 1977. I was newly married and gaining weight faster than a train gains speed. I knew I had a problem and I wanted God's solution. Or at least I thought I did.

His answer seemed impossible to do. I felt He told me, "Stop

eating sugar. Eat more meat, fruits and vegetables. Don't eat so much bread."

I was like the rich young ruler who went away sad when Jesus told Him to sell all his stuff and give it away. I didn't feel I could give up sugar. It was my source for all comfort and emotional control.

When I was single I lived in Virginia and worked for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. My life was incredibly busy with work, master's classes, leading a growing young adult group and managing my life on my own.

This was both good and bad. I gained some weight during the two years I was there but it wasn't significant. I didn't have time to eat much. However, once I got married life settled down to just me and my husband.

The 50 young adults I led were 900 miles away. I couldn't find a full-time job. I worried about money and purpose and significance. Isn't life supposed to be about getting married, having a family and living happily ever after?

I loved my husband and we had a great time together. Those first few years, though, were hard for me to figure out who I was as married person. And to be truthful, I turned to food, especially anything with sugar, as the answer to every problem and difficulty.

It was obvious I had a problem. I knew food had control over me, but we are human and we have to eat. I tried diets, every one I could find. Why isn't there a diet that lets you eat what you have learned to love and still lose weight?

I kept searching for one and in the mean time continued to gain weight. I am a really successful dieter. I can follow a diet for a short period of time and lose an extreme amount of weight. However, after losing weight and going back to the way I always ate, I would gain the weight back. You can read more

about this in my memoir, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds*.

I understood Paul's cry in Romans 7:24. For me it went something like this. "Oh pitiful mess of a woman I am! Who will save me from this constant, unmitigated eating that will certainly lead to my death?"

The next few verses give the answer, but I didn't really understand it at the time. It says that Jesus is the answer. I want to do the right thing but I am a slave to what my body craves. "The life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death."¹

This was the answer, but the practical application would take me 30 years to understand.

In 1977, God gave me a game-changing answer for my life. "Stop eating sugar." He knew I had the metabolic makeup to become a sugar addict. He also knew if I would adhere to His advice, I would be free of its pull. If not, I would be a slave to it.

Right at that moment, God gave me a clear choice. I could be a slave to sugar or to Him. I chose sugar.

It wasn't as clear-cut as that to me then. I had no idea that when I stayed away from sugar, I would not crave it. Eating one bite sends me back down the spiral to sugar slavery.

The obesity epidemic is out of control in America. We have too much processed food that is chock-full of sugar and we have become a slave to it.

God wants us set free. However, we have to make the choice. I now live what I call a fasted lifestyle. I don't eat processed sugar. Every time I make that choice, I say to myself, "God, I choose you over that dessert."

The pull for me now is not the taste of a sugary dessert because that overwhelming sweetness is repulsive to me now

that I've been solidly on this journey for three years.

The pull is social interaction. I'm realizing that as others eat their cake, I can have a bowl of strawberries and feel more than satisfied. The satisfaction is in the fact that I'm no longer bound to this addiction.

The life-giving Spirit of Christ, His grace propels me on to be more than someone who wallows in the pull of a substance.

My boundaries are firm and I will not be moved. I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency.² His grace is sufficient for me. His power is made perfect in my weakness.³

His Spirit has set me free from my biggest sin temptation.¹ The answer still and always will be Jesus.⁴

What would it take for you to make the commitment to stop eating sugar for the rest of your life?

¹ Romans 8:2

² Philippians 4:13

³ 2 Corinthians 12:9

⁴ Romans 7:25

Teresa Shields Parker is a wife, mother, business owner, speaker and author of *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor* and *Sweet Grace Study Guide: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Overcome Sugar Addiction*. Get a free chapter of her memoir on her blog at [. Connect with her there or on her Facebook page.](#)

Become a Force for God That the Enemy Recognizes

When I was growing up, I learned the meaning of standing strong in God by watching my family. They were living examples I could observe every day. I saw how faithful my parents were to God and to each other, and I wanted to be like that, too.

My mom was a deeply committed woman of God. I am convinced that every demon and devil of hell knew her name—her first name. My grandmother was so full of the power of the Holy Ghost that she could lay hands on the sick and, believe me, they would recover.

My daddy was a farmer, who started his day between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m. But every morning, he would get up an hour or so before work to pray for everybody—12 kids and later, 50 grandkids.

When my older sisters would come home from school each day, before they changed their clothes and started dinner, they would go on their knees and pray. Like our mom, they would fast for days at a time, too.

Growing up in that kind of environment embedded in me a clear concept of what a life lived for God should look like. Although I've missed the mark more than once, I've always wanted to walk with God, work with Him, worship Him and stand strong in Him. Now, I want you to enjoy those same things too.

Strength in Weakness

Standing strong isn't about having inner strength or being a tough person. It doesn't mean you've been hardened by life's experiences or are a graduate of the school of hard knocks.

You don't stand strong because your legs are sturdy or because you have German, African or Native American blood. Nor is it because you happened to grow up in New York City or on a ranch in Montana. Finally, it's not because your mean big brother used to beat you up.

You stand strong because you are strong in your spirit. You are able to stand tall (with confidence) and stand long (with perseverance) when you've learned how to draw from a reservoir of spiritual strength that comes from God.

You stand strong in your spirit because you are filled with God's Spirit. But you are only strong in God because you are, in and of yourself, weak. Paul said, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10, NKJV). You have such limited power of your own that you need to keep asking for God's Spirit to fill you up continually.

Standing strong means knowing who God is, and trusting Him to do what He says He will do. You can't become strong in your spirit overnight, and it doesn't happen automatically. It's a lifelong process of growth, and you have to cooperate with it. When the disciples wanted to see an example of the kingdom of God, Jesus showed them a child. To become strong in spirit, you must become childlike in your faith.

Sometimes the only way to become strong in spirit is through trials. The adversities of life can transform you and make you stronger in the Spirit. Perhaps you've already seen this in your own walk with the Lord. However, sometimes, you learn this lesson through watching the Lord work in someone else's life.

Because of a medical error, author Bob Sorge has suffered with pain, both physical and emotional, for more than a decade. Formerly a successful and gifted worship leader and pastor, today he is unable to talk above a whisper and can no longer pastor a church or lead worship.

But there is one thing he can do, and by doing it, he has become a closer companion of God and an inspiration to countless people. What can he do? He can stand strong.

In his book *In His Face* (Oasis House), he wrote: "Some victories are gained not through an aggressive posturing of faith, but by simply standing. God didn't deliver Joseph from his prison because Joseph had a dynamic stance of faith, but because he kept his gaze fixed upon God.

"Joseph didn't understand what was happening to him. He could get powerful revelations for other people (the butler and the baker), but when it came to his own life he could see nothing. But at the right time, God came and delivered him."

Far from being a last resort or a compensation for repeated failures, standing strong is the result of a life lived in and for God. Standing strong keeps Bob—and you and me—right in the middle of the palm of God's hand, no matter what our circumstances are.

Strength to Endure

We grow stronger when we put our roots down in Jesus. He is our perfect example in all things. Throughout the years of His ministry, Jesus stood firm. When He arose from the grave, He went on to stand for all eternity in fullest authority and share His authority with those who would believe in Him.

It's obvious that someone who stands strong in God has a different kind of spirit inside. That kind of person does not go along with the crowd. That kind of person does not yield to fear. That kind of person does not compromise his or her faith, even when everybody else decides to do so.

Joshua and Caleb were two members of the select group of 12 who got to sneak into the Promised Land to spy it out for Moses and the people of Israel. The Bible declares that these two men had a "different spirit" from the rest of the leaders (Num. 14:24).

When the spies returned with their report, 10 of them said: "This is impossible. All of the armies of Israel's tribes will not be strong enough to prevail against those fearsome giants that we saw. The land of milk and honey is occupied already—by giants. Just forget about it. We're stuck here in the wilderness now" (Num. 13:31-33).

But Joshua and Caleb stood firm, even though the other 10 spies—and all the people of Israel—disagreed with their wisdom and refused to believe they could take the land (v. 30). This refusal on the part of the people created a crisis of the highest magnitude. God threatened to cancel His promise and start over with new people (Num. 14:11-12). But Moses persuaded the Lord to stay His hand. Now they would have to endure a 40-year wilderness trek and the slow attrition of all of the unwilling masses.

Joshua and Caleb, to their everlasting credit, didn't add insult to injury and rebel against Moses' leadership, even if they may have privately disagreed with it. They just stuck to their original evaluation—"Yes, we can conquer that land. It's ours. God has given it to us." They were willing to stand firm for 40 long, dusty years in the wilderness without wavering, despite negative opinions and many seeming setbacks.

In the long run, after persevering, they won. Even Moses didn't get to possess the land. But Joshua and Caleb never gave up the idea that God wanted them to conquer the Promised Land.

Strength Beyond Ourselves

The lives of Joshua and Caleb exemplify four key elements that are necessary in order to know how to stand in the strength of the Lord and take any promised land: Sight. You must have the vision for what God wants to accomplish. The Word says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18, KJV).

When God plunked Ezekiel down above a whole valley of dry

bones, and He said, "Ezekiel, prophesy!" Ezekiel had a little trouble believing that so much deadness could actually come back to life. But after he spoke to those dead bones and decreed that they should live again, they did (Ezek. 37).

Ezekiel had to speak life to his vision. The whole thing was unreal before he did that. It's the same with you and me. Sometimes we need to speak life to our dreams.

Don't be afraid to shout a proclamation and declare a decree over the vision you have. God gave you that vision, and it needs to stand up and live. Your part is to pray and believe—consistently, persistently.

Right. You must have a grasp of why the vision is clearly yours to claim. Because your vision is God's idea and not yours, you don't want your prayers to reflect your limited viewpoint or opinions or desires. Your vision must be nourished and kept alive with God's own Word. Every time you ask Him to fulfill your vision, you must base your request on His Word, the Bible.

You need to be in the Word every day. Read it, sing it, memorize it and pray it back to Him. His Word declares His intentions and shows you how your vision fits in with them. His Word prepares your heart for prayer and furnishes you with the vocabulary you need when you pray.

It is an irrefutable fact—God cannot lie (Num. 23:19). When you stand in prayer, you can be rock-solid sure of God's integrity. Stand in agreement with Him about your God-given vision, and continue to immerse yourself in His Word. He will convict you and correct you, and His Word will keep you on the path of faith so you can persist in your prayer until the end.

Might. It is extremely important that you comprehend the supernatural power that is at your disposal. I would be remiss if I failed to mention the importance of fasting. If you combine fasting with your prayers, you will see greater

results. In fact, there is no better way to underline your prayers and put them in boldface print.

In Matthew 6:16, Jesus said, "*When* you fast," not if you fast (emphasis added). He assumes that you will do it, and He gives you suggestions for doing it well. He wants you to fast in some way, usually in a variety of ways, consistently. Don't wait for Him to give you a big sign in the sky to tell you to do it. Just do it. You will find that fasting helps you stay right at His feet.

When you are seeking God about something, you need to pursue Him relentlessly, full of faith, until you feel a release in your spirit. I can remember when I was a small child, being with my mom and older sisters at all-night prayer meetings. I would fall asleep in the pew as they tarried in prayer.

As I grew older, I began to appreciate that tarrying meant persevering until you broke through to an answer. It meant faithfully staying before God, waiting until He assures you that you have prayed enough.

Your adversary, the devil, will try to make you want to settle for less than the full answer to your prayers. He will try to wear you down, but if you hang on to the Word and God's promises, you will outlast him.

Fight. You must be willing to take on giants, and able to maintain that willingness over the long haul, persevering in prayer until the chosen day finally arrives. At first, Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who were willing to tackle the impossible situation. They were ready to fight those giants, the sooner the better.

As it turned out, because they represented the minority opinion, they had to wait to do their fighting. But amazingly, they kept the faith so well that they were still primed to fight, and as strong in body and spirit as they had been when

they were fresh from their spying mission 40 years before (Josh. 14:7-12).

There will always be opposition to your mission. But everything God has said will come to pass. Your destiny is wrapped up in His plan. Your life has eternal significance, and your prayers will bring your God-given destiny to fruition.

Do not grow weary. Stand strong against any temptation to give up the fight. Stand before God, day in and day out. Ask Him to give you a different spirit, as He did for Joshua and Caleb. He will do it!

Read a companion devotional.

Judy Jacobs is known for her inspiring and anointed singing and preaching. She is the author of Stand Strong (Charisma House), from which this article was adapted.

7 Ways to Step Into the Healing Power of God

Many Christians today believe in the doctrine of healing by faith in God. But some wonder: How can a person who fully believes in this doctrine actually receive the blessing and appropriate healing?

I suggest seven steps.

First, be fully persuaded of the Word of God in this matter. The Word is the only sure foundation of rational and

scriptural faith. Your faith must rest on the great principles and promises of the Bible, or it can never stand the testings that are sure to come. You must be so sure that this is part of the gospel and the redemption of Christ that all the reasonings of the best men and women cannot shake you.

Most of the practical failures of faith in this matter result from defective or doubtful convictions concerning the divine Word. A woman who had fully embraced this truth and accepted Christ as her Healer was immediately strengthened very much both in spirit and body. Her overflowing heart was only too glad to tell the good news to all her friends. Among others, she met her pastor and told him of her faith and blessing.

To her surprise, he immediately objected to any such views. He warned her against this new fanaticism and told her that these promises on which she was resting were not for us but were only for the apostles and the apostolic age. She listened, questioned, yielded and abandoned her confidence. In less than one month, when I saw her again, she had sunk to such depression that she scarcely knew whether she even believed the Bible.

If those promises were for the apostles, she argued, why might not all the other promises of the Bible also be for them only? I invited her to spend time examining the teaching of the Word of God.

We carefully compared the promises of healing from Exodus to James. Every question we calmly weighed until the truth became so manifest and its evidence so overwhelming that she could only say, "I know it is here, and I know it is true, even if all the world should deny it!"

Then she knelt and asked the Lord's forgiveness for her weakness and unbelief. She renewed her solemn profession of faith and consecration and claimed again the promise of healing and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

From that day she has been restored and blessed with all spiritual blessings. The very pastor who caused her to stumble has been forced to own that this is the finger of God. But the starting point of all her blessing was the moment when she fully accepted and rested in the living Word.

Second, be fully assured of the will of God to heal you. Most persons are ready enough to admit the power of Christ to heal. But true faith implies equal confidence in the willingness of God to answer the prayer of faith. Any doubt on this point will surely paralyze your prayer for definite healing. If there is any question of God's will to heal you, there can be no certainty in your expectation.

A mere vague trust in the possible acceptance of your prayer is not faith definite enough to grapple with the forces of disease and death. The prayer for healing, "if it be Thy will," carries with it no claim for which Satan will quit his hold. This is a matter about which you ought to know His will before you ask, and then you must will and claim it because it is His will.

Has God given you any means by which you may know His will? Most assuredly. If the Lord Jesus has purchased healing for you in His redemption, it must be God's will for you to have it, for Christ's whole redeeming work was simply the executing of the Father's will. If Jesus has promised it to you, it must be His will that you receive it, for how can you know His will but by His Word?

The Word of God is forever the standard of His will, and that Word has declared immutably that it is God's greatest desire and unalterable principle of action to give to every person according as he or she will believe. Especially has He promised to save all who will receive Christ by faith and to heal all who will receive healing by similar faith.

No one thinks of asking for forgiveness "if it be Thy will."

Nor should you throw any stronger doubt on His promise of physical redemption. Both are freely offered to every trusting person who will accept them.

Third, be careful that you are right with God. If your sickness has come to you on account of any sinful cause, be sure that you thoroughly repent of and confess your sins and make all restitution as far as it is in your power. If sickness has been a discipline designed to separate you from some evil, at once present yourself to God in frank self-judgment and consecration and claim from Him the grace to sanctify you and keep you holy.

An impure heart is a constant fountain of disease. A sanctified spirit is in itself as wholesome as it is holy. At the same time, do not let Satan paralyze your faith by throwing you back on your unworthiness, telling you that you are not good enough to claim healing.

You never can deserve any of God's mercies. The only plea is the name, the merits and the righteousness of Christ.

But you can renounce known sin and you can walk so as to please God. You can judge yourself and put away all that God shows you to be wrong. The moment you do this you are forgiven.

Do not wait to feel forgiveness or joy, but let your will be wholly turned to God, and believe at once that you are accepted. Then "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having [your heart] sprinkled from an evil conscience and [your body] washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22).

It is quite vain for you to try to exercise faith for yourself or others in the face of willful transgression and in defiance of the chastening God has meant you should respect and yield to. But when you receive His correction and turn to Him with a

humble and obedient heart, He may then graciously remove the pain and make the touch of healing the token of His forgiving love.

“The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:15-16).

Fourth, commit your body to God and claim by simple faith His promise of healing in the name of Jesus. Having become fully persuaded of the Word of God, the will of God and your own personal acceptance with God, now appropriate your healing. Do not merely ask for it, but humbly and firmly claim healing as His covenant pledge, as your inheritance, as a purchased redemption right. Claim it as something already fully offered you in the gospel and waiting only your acceptance to make good your possession.

There is a great difference between asking and taking, between expecting and accepting. You must take Christ as your Healer—not as an experiment, not as a future benefit, but as a present reality. You must believe that He does now, according to His promise, touch your life with His almighty hand and quicken the fountains of your being with His strength.

Do not merely believe that He will do so, but claim and believe that He does now touch you and begins the work of healing in your body. And go forth counting it done, acknowledging and praising Him for it.

From that moment, doubt should be regarded as absolutely out of the question and even the thought of retreating to old “means” inadmissible. God has become the Physician, and He will not give His glory to another. God has healed, and all human attempts at helping would imply a doubt of the reality of the healing.

Fifth, act your faith. To the paralyzed man, Jesus commanded,

“‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house’” (Mark 2:11). Not to show your faith or display your courage but because of your faith begin to act as one who is healed.

Treat Christ as if you trusted Him by attempting in His name and strength what would be impossible in your own. He will not fail you if you really trust Him and continue to act your faith consistently and courageously. But it is most important that you not do this on human faith or word.

Do not rise from your bed or walk on your lame foot because somebody tells you to do so. That is not faith but impression. God will surely tell you to, but it must be at His Word.

If you are walking with Him and trusting Him, you will know His voice. Your prayer, like Peter’s, must be, “Lord ... bid me come unto Thee on the water,” and He will surely bid you if He is to heal you.

Sixth, be prepared for trials of faith. Do not look necessarily for the immediate removal of the symptoms. Do not think of them. Simply ignore them and press forward, claiming the reality back of all symptoms.

Remember the health you have claimed is not your own natural strength, but the life of Jesus manifested in your mortal flesh. Therefore, the old natural life may still be encompassed with many infirmities, but back of it and over against it is the all-sufficient life of Christ to sustain your body. “You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

But Christ is your life (v. 4), and “the life which [you] now live in the flesh [you] live by faith in the Son of God, who loved [you] and gave Himself for [you]” (Gal. 2:20). Do not, then, wonder if nature fails you. The Lord’s healing is not nature. It is grace. It is by the power of the risen Lord.

It is Christ who is your life. Christ’s body is for your body

as His Spirit was for your spirit. Therefore, do not wonder if there should be trials. They come to show you your need of Christ and to throw you back upon Him.

To know this and so to put on His strength in your weakness and live in it moment by moment is the way of perfect healing. Then, again, trials always test and strengthen faith in proportion as it is real. Faith must be shown to be genuine so that God can vindicate His reward of it before the whole universe.

Seventh, use your new strength and health for God, and be careful to obey the will of the Master. This Christ-given strength is a very sacred thing. It is the resurrection life of Christ in you. And it must be spent as He Himself would spend it.

It cannot be wasted on sin and selfishness. It must be given to God as "a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1). The strength will fail when it is devoted to the world, and sin will always bring bodily chastisement. You may expect to "prosper and be in health, even as [your] soul prospereth."

Nor is it enough for you to use this healing for yourself. You must testify of it to others. You must tell it to the world. You must be a fearless and faithful witness to the gospel of full redemption.

This is not a faith that you can hold to yourself. It is a great and solemn trust. In receiving it you must unite with others to use it for the glory of God, for a witness to the truth and for the spread of the gospel.

In taking these seven steps, let us claim and keep and consecrate this great gift of the gospel and the grace of God. And let us trust "the God of peace Himself" to "sanctify [us] completely" and to preserve our "whole spirit, soul, and body ... blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." For "He

who calls [us] is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

Read a companion devotional.

Albert Benjamin (A.B.) Simpson (1843-1919) was a Pentecostal pastor, evangelist and preacher based in New York City. He founded the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1897 to promote world missions.

The Passionate Prayer Jesus Is Praying for You

We are fixing our gaze on Jesus, who stripped down and ran the bruising course that won our salvation. He ran with determination – single-minded in His pursuit, tenacious in His resolve. When He hit the wall, He powered through. He ran to win, and He won the prize. He is seated at the right hand of the Father. Is that the prize?

I don't think so. That is what He was willing to leave behind to pursue our salvation. "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began" (John 17: 5). He didn't have to win that position. What was the prize? What was Jesus's heart so set on that He "endured the cross, scorning the shame"?

We are the prize. Can you believe it? Read it for yourself. "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2: 6– 7). The promise that motivated Jesus and kept Him at His task was the promise that we would be seated in the heavenlies with Him.

Listen to His impassioned prayer: “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.” – John 17: 22– 24

The phrase “I want those you have given me to be with me where I am” could be more literally translated “I want that where I am they may be with me,” according to the UBS New Testament Handbook Series. He speaks in a verb tense that means “where I am” at any given moment.

Jesus wants us with Him now. Are we seeing His glory right now? Paul says we are: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3: 18 NASB). Are we with Him right now? We are included in Him and present with Him in the heavenly realms, just as He is in us in the earthly realm.

We have a saying that is meant to demean the value of someone. “She’s no prize,” we might say sarcastically. Isn’t it amazing to know that Jesus thinks just the opposite? “What a prize you are!” He says to you. “Worth everything you cost Me!” When Jesus chose to run the race marked out for Him, He did it to obtain a promise. He wasn’t running just to run. He was running to win the prize.

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Thinking About Cosmetic Surgery? Try These 6 Things First

You'll need more than cosmetics for great-looking skin and a lovely appearance. You'll need to understand the health and beauty connection.

Beauty truly does radiate from within. A healthy, vibrant woman defies age. As a testimony and reflection of our self-esteem, inner beauty and vibrancy, true beauty is the result of inner vitality, balance, health and happiness—not vanity.

Optimal nutrition, stress-relieving exercise and a positive frame of mind are requirements you must tote along on your continued journey toward complete balance. A balanced body and a beautiful spirit are better than the very best cosmetic application or surgery.

With proper nutrition, rest, relaxation and exercise, you can keep your body balanced, healthy and youthful throughout your entire life. Your skin can be wrinkle-free and elastic, your eyes can sparkle, your complexion can be smooth, and your face can be firm and tight.

When it comes to aging, there are two choices: you either embrace it, or you try to erase it with cosmetic procedures. However, you can begin feeling and looking better—and younger—if you're willing to make simple lifestyle changes and adjust your health and beauty regimen.

Skin Sins

Your appearance will start changing for the better soon after you begin eliminating these harmful habits that are taking a toll on your skin and overall well-being:

Sun exposure. Nothing ages you faster and is more damaging to your skin than sun exposure. However, you can prevent sun damage by wearing sunscreen whenever you leave the house.

You should wear at least SPF-15. Wear SPF-30 if you are a golfer or if you spend time at the beach. Sunscreen not only protects you from future sun damage, it can also help reverse past damage because, with protection, your skin gets a chance to repair itself. If possible, stay covered or out of the sun completely between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Lack of sleep. I consider sleep to be the best beauty vitamin in the entire world. Nighttime is when your body repairs itself. This includes your skin. Collagen and elastin are replaced and new cells are built, thereby erasing the previous day's exposure to sun and environmental toxins.

Your skin is more absorbent and receptive at night, so it is a perfect time to moisturize and add topical vitamin treatments. Lack of sleep will cut these benefits, leaving you with dark circles, puffiness, sallowness and even pimples.

Stress increases the levels of adrenal hormones, such as testosterone, which can trigger acne. Stress hormones can also cause your blood flow to be directed away from your limbs and major organs, leaving your skin crying out for the nutrients it needs.

When you are stressed, it is harder to repair your complexion with skin care. Stressed skin simply does not respond to treatments as well as relaxed skin. Practice deep breathing, exercise and/or take a tub bath with lavender essential oils to help de-stress your body, mind and spirit.

Lack of exercise. Exercise boosts oxygen in your blood and in turn improves your skin tone. Exercise also increases your tolerance to stress and helps you sleep, which will boost your skin health as well. For optimal skin health, try to do three sets of 20 minutes of exercise each week. Try cycling, walking

at a good pace, swimming and running, if your joints are healthy.

Caffeine. Every cup of coffee you drink needs three cups of water to process through your system. Caffeine is very dehydrating to the skin. In addition, it increases your level of stress hormones, which can lead to poor skin health.

Smoking is the second most damaging thing you can do to your skin, second only to sun exposure. The nicotine found in cigarettes constricts the blood vessels in your face, making your skin look gray or sallow.

A chemical in cigarettes, acetaldehyde, attacks the fiber in your skin that holds it together. Factor in the constant creasing and wrinkling of the eyes due to smoke irritation and the pursing of your lips, and you have all the ingredients for looking 10 years older than women who do not smoke. The good news is that quitting before the age of 30 returns your body to the level of a nonsmoker within 10 years—and that includes your skin.

Alcohol dilates blood vessels, leading to broken veins. Like cigarettes, alcohol also contains acetaldehyde, which attacks skin fibers and reduces elasticity and firmness. In addition, alcohol robs the body of vitamin C, a key nutrient for healthy skin.

More Than Meets the Eye

In today's world, the skin care and cosmetic surgery industry is booming and has become one of the largest, most profitable industries in America. Like women before us, we are on a constant search for the latest and greatest botanical, liposomal, antioxidant, exfoliant or hydrator in the world to make us appear more beautiful with skin that is visibly younger and smoother.

The fact remains that even in our advanced generation, beautiful skin is so much more than skin deep. Yes, there are lunchtime peels, microdermabrasion, laser resurfacing, and other techniques to smooth and erase fine lines, but it is an undeniable fact that beautiful skin is still the result of a healthy, toxin-free body.

When we are young, our skin is soft, supple and glowing. Beautiful skin comes naturally in our youth. But, as we age, beautiful skin is a reward for taking proper care of our bodies. The skin is a barometer that reflects what is going on with us internally. Skin care is big business these days as baby boomers anxiously take part in staving off the signs of aging.

Stress, excessive sun exposure, liver malfunction, hormone depletion, smoking, alcohol, sugar, fried foods, caffeine and poor circulation all contribute to the condition of our skin. Age spots, wrinkles, dry skin, uneven skin tone, sallow complexion and acne are the result of how well our systems handle wastes.

For healthy, glowing skin, the following simple practices will greatly benefit you:

Skin Care Therapy

- Drink eight to 10 glasses of water each day.
- Add fresh lemon for added benefit.
- Make a fresh "liver cocktail" each day (use a juicer). The juice consists of 2 ounces of beet juice, 3 ounces of carrot juice and 3 ounces of cucumber juice.
- Avoid sugars, caffeine and red meat to prevent dehydration.
- Eat fresh fruit and vegetables each day; fruits are wonderful cleaners.

Body Therapy

- Reduce or prevent wrinkles by rubbing papaya skins on the face. (Papain is an enzyme that exfoliates the skin.)
- Manage stress.
- Practice deep breathing.
- Have a massage with almond oil, sesame oil or wheat germ oil to soften the skin.
- Moisturize immediately after bathing.
- Rub lemon juice on age spots or use 2 percent hydroquinone topical cream to reduce and fade age spots.
- Limit sun exposure and always use a sunblock SPF-15 or more to prevent further damage and to prevent age spots from darkening.

It's a Beautiful Life

True beauty comes from the inner woman—her essence, her spirit. A truly beautiful woman possesses a radiance that cannot be duplicated by the most skilled plastic surgeon or the most expensive topical beauty serum.

People naturally gravitate toward beauty. Think of nature—how we all are drawn to pick a beautiful flower, or to at least pause to smell and admire the beauty of a fragrant rose. We are drawn because we instinctively know that flowers are beautiful inside and out. We pick them not only for their visual beauty, but also for their sweet essence. And so it goes for woman. True beauty comes from our very essence.

The Bible tells us, “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

The most beautiful woman I have ever known had an essence that drew men and women alike. Although her outward appearance would never suggest that she had such magnetism, her essence

captured the hearts of those around her.

She was loyal, confident, strong, unselfish, dependable, unassuming, loving, a best friend, humorous, humble and gentle. She gave of herself, never sought approval, and she had faith and a sense of her true worth.

The beauty guidelines I have given you focus mainly on the outward appearance. But in order to experience beauty throughout your lifetime, you must cultivate it from within. Let it flow through you each day.

Live a beautiful life—let beauty radiate from your body, mind and spirit. Physical beauty is only skin deep and fades with the passing of time. But true beauty comes from your core and leaves a lasting impression.

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What if You Said Yes to God?

I love her because she taught me how to put on nylons when I was in middle school and because she has shown me how to enjoy knowing Jesus. Just back from Kenya on a short-term trip to work in a hospice, she had me in tears with this story that I know will encourage you.



Please welcome the beautiful, fun, and tender-hearted Carol Draeger. Once my aunt and now my dear friend.

On a recent mission trip to a hospice in rural Kenya, our team of five decided to pray and sing over each patient at their bedside. One older woman, Anna, had end-of-life cervical cancer and insisted she sit on the edge of her bed as we laid hands on her. After we prayed, my heart became very tender for her, and I wept as she looked deep into my eyes and said over and over *Asante, Asante*, thank you, thank you.

That night, God woke me up and told me, *Tomorrow, sit with Anna.*

I can do that, Lord, I said.

The next morning I told the medical director my desire to sit with Anna. After a few minutes, the medical director came and asked me if I still wanted to sit with Anna as she didn't have much longer. I asked if she meant Anna might pass in the next day, and she answered, *No, seconds!*

I rushed to Anna's side and held her hand just as she was passing. I told the Lord I was sorry that I didn't get to sit with Anna.

You will sit with Anna all the way to the funeral home. She has no family here with her.

Okay, Lord, I said.

I helped transfer Anna to the ambulance and rode the short distance to the funeral home. After assuring the mortician that I was okay with this, I helped transfer her to the metal table, undress her and cover her with a white satin sheet. I said goodbye as we slid her into the cooler.

It was one of the most pure and holy moments I've ever experienced.

I told the ambulance driver what God had told me to do, and he said they would use that as testimony at her funeral. So this is what God meant by *sit with Anna*, and it may, in fact, be my

fondest memory of Kenya.

What holy task does God whisper to your heart this day?

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